



News Release

STATE OF MARYLAND

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Outfitting Man's Best Friend for Safety:

Western Correctional Institution Equipping K9s With Stab Vests, Donating to Allied Agencies

Wednesday, October 22 at 10:30 a.m.

TOWSON, MD (October 17, 2008)---Western Correctional Institution will outfit Division of Correction and other allied agencies' K9s with stab vests during a special ceremony on Wednesday, October 22 at 10:30 a.m. at the prison on McMullen Highway in Cresaptown.

The vests---surplus equipment no longer useable for correctional officers---have been re-sewn by WCI Lt. Rita Beal to fit the four Division of Correction K9s who routinely work at WCI and neighboring North Branch Correctional Institution. In addition, Natural Resources Police will be given a vest for their Western Maryland-based dog; other law enforcement agencies may participate in the future.

The idea for the dog vests came from WCI Warden Bobby Shearin, a 35-year veteran of the federal and Maryland correctional systems. "It's a chance to protect these very valuable correctional resources---the dogs--- and give to our law enforcement partners at the same time," says Mr. Shearin. "Protecting our staff----right down to the dogs--- is our top priority."

WCI has undertaken many innovative programs designed to enhance safety and reduce inmate idleness. Most recently, the prison horticulture program has been expanded, and its greenhouse and meditation garden have earned a spread in a book published by the TKF Foundation, which funded the project, and a mention in the New York Times. This fall, wheelchair-using inmates will begin a project to turn scrap and surplus wood into toys for needy children in Western Maryland.

"Anything we can do to help the community, to help keep inmates contributing to society in some small way, is a victory," says Warden Shearin.

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